

In the Specification:

Please amend the paragraph at Page 21, lines 13-23 as follows:

The kinetic inhibition of RuO₂ formation on Ru(0001) upon exposure to O₂ at 300 K appears to be known, as described, for example, in M. Tanaka, and M. Ami, *J. Am. Ceram. Soc.*, **81**, [[1969]] 2513 (1998), and accounts for the limited oxide layer thickness observed for clean Ru(0001) exposed to room air, or air and liquid water (Table 1). This kinetic barrier is less apparent for polycrystalline surfaces, however, as demonstrated by the substantially thicker oxide formed on the polycrystalline as compared to a single crystal surface (Table 1). While a greater reactivity of the polycrystalline as compared to the close-packed single crystal surface is not surprising, there may be implications for the processing of Ru diffusion barriers during microelectronics fabrication, since such barrier surfaces are more likely to resemble the polycrystalline rather than the single crystal surface.